

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED IN DETAIL

Items Included in the Alternative Descriptions

The descriptions of alternative plans presented later in this chapter each include a discussion of the alternative goals, multiple use and transfer areas, other resource uses, and a summary of activity plans.

Goals

Goals are general states or conditions that resource management is designed to achieve. They are generally not quantifiable. Goals are the basis for developing objectives.

Multiple Use and Transfer Areas and Other Resource Uses

Seventeen multiple use and transfer areas were delineated to describe land use allocations for the Monument RMP alternatives. This includes one moderate use area (M1), twelve limited use areas (L1 to L12), and four transfer area categories (T1 to T4). All of these areas are not included in any one alternative. Some of these areas cover different physical locations from one alternative to another. The acreage in each multiple use or transfer area is shown by alternative in Table 2-2. These multiple use and transfer area categories are significant in that once a plan has been selected and approved, the categories cannot be changed without a plan amendment. General provisions for multiple use and transfer areas were presented earlier in this chapter.

In addition to multiple use and transfer areas, each alternative plan includes a discussion of other resource uses. These are resource uses that occur in more than one multiple use area and are not addressed in each multiple use area discussion. For example, livestock grazing occurs in many multiple use areas. A discussion of proposed grazing levels and range improvements for each multiple use area would be very cumbersome, so livestock forage is covered under other resource uses.

Objectives are stated in each discussion of multiple use and transfer areas or other resource uses. Objectives are resource specific conditions to be achieved. They are well defined to guide future management and preparation of activity plans. Where possible, they are quantified.

Required actions to accomplish the objectives are discussed for the multiple use and transfer areas or other resource uses. Examples of required

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actions are range improvements, ORV restrictions, and development of more detailed management plans or activity plans.

Summary of Activity Plans

Each alternative plan description ends with a summary of activity plans required for implementation of the plan. Activity plans are site-specific, detailed plans developed after approval of a RMP. The RMP identifies where activity plans are needed to implement the general management decisions of the RMP. Activity plans are generally resource specific covering major program areas. Examples of activity plans are habitat management plans (HMPs) for a wildlife habitat management area, allotment management plans (AMPs) for specific grazing allotments, and a limited fire suppression plan for the Monument Planning Area.

Items Common to All Alternatives

A fire management plan will be prepared regardless of which alternative plan is selected. This plan will consolidate the fire management guidelines of all other plans into one activity plan that will guide the overall fire management activities of the Shoshone District. It will consolidate fire management guidelines from this RMP, other land use plans, and activity plans such as HMPs and limited fire suppression plans.

The most important riparian habitat has already been protected by fencing to exclude livestock. Since riparian habitat is scarce in the planning area and little more can be done to protect existing habitat, the proposal for all alternatives will be to maintain existing fences to protect riparian habitat.

The Great Rift WSA was recommended suitable for wilderness designation in a previous study. Further consideration of this recommendation is outside the scope of this plan. The portion of the Great Rift WSA included in the Monument Planning Area covers 179,990 acres of BLM-administered public land. This area, called L2, is recommended suitable in all of the alternatives. It is not specifically discussed in each alternative, and analysis of environmental consequences does not consider consequences associated with the Great Rift WSA.

One planning issue discussed in Chapter 1 is "Lands for Local and State Governments and Other Needs." These needs are identified by governments and other groups or individuals on a site-specific, as needed basis. Allowable uses were discussed earlier in this chapter under Resource Management Guidelines. "Any valid use, occupancy, and development of the public lands, including but not limited to, those requiring rights-of-way, leases, and licenses will be considered, subject to applicable environmental review procedures, unless specifically excluded in the plan." Thus, unless specifically

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excluded in the approved RMP, these needs may be considered on a case-by-case basis. This issue is not addressed in more detail in any alternative.

Specific ORV use areas are not proposed in any of the alternatives because no specific proposals for concentrated use areas have been communicated to BLM. However, establishment of such areas could be considered in areas where not specifically excluded in the plan.

Description of Alternatives

Four alternative plans were developed for consideration in the selection of a proposed RMP for the Monument Planning Area. Each alternative addresses the planning issues in a different way. Table 2-1 summarizes how the issues were addressed in each alternative. The alternatives were developed to cover a range of possible resource uses. Thus the environmental consequences of various management options were available for consideration in selection of a proposed RMP.

Alternative A

Goals. The "No Action" alternative would continue present management direction. Most of the Monument Planning Area is not currently covered by an approved land use plan. Therefore, resource use levels for Alternative A were established by examining recent use levels and projected trends. Management direction for a portion of the southwest corner of the planning area would be provided by the existing Canyon Management Framework Plan (MFP). This MFP covers less than 3 percent of the BLM-administered public land in the planning area.

Resource use levels would generally remain the same as present levels in Alternative A. For example, livestock grazing levels would remain at present average actual use levels. No conversions from sheep use to cattle use would be allowed except where specifically addressed in an existing AMP. The number of Isolated Tracts managed for wildlife would stay at present levels.

Minor changes from the present could occur in Alternative A. Management actions required to implement an existing activity plan could be accomplished. New uses, such as communications sites, rights-of-way, and landfills could occur subject to environmental review. The resource management guidelines discussed at the beginning of this chapter would apply.

As defined by BLM policy, Alternative A is the proposed action for livestock grazing.

Alternatives Considered in Detail
Description of Alternatives; Alternative A

Multiple Use and Transfer Areas in Alternative A. Map 2 shows the locations of the multiple use and transfer areas for Alternative A.

M1-Moderate Use. 980,463 acres. No special limitations or restrictions on the type or intensity of resource use would be applied. Valid uses would be allowed subject to environmental review and stipulations or special conditions to protect resources. This area would be open to ORV use.

L9-Snake River Rim Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA). 4,515 acres. This area would be managed to provide opportunities for a wide variety of recreation activities including rifle shooting, archery, motorcycle riding/racing, picnicking, and sightseeing while resolving conflicts among various uses and protecting cultural resources and fragile soils. The demand for these activities is expected to increase as is the potential for user conflicts. The area would be managed according to the existing Snake River Rim Recreation Area Management Plan. This is the only intensive recreation management area in the planning area currently covered by a recreation activity management plan (RAMP).

Sub-area L9a, 450 acres in the Devil's Corral and Vineyard Creek area, would be closed to ORV use to protect cultural resources and soils. ORV use would be limited to designated roads and trails to protect soils in sub-area L9b, 354 acres. The remaining 3,711 acres would be open to ORV use. Live-stock grazing and minerals activities would not be restricted by recreation oriented management in L9.

L11-Isolated Tracts. 10,563 acres. These tracts would be managed according to the existing Isolated Tracts Habitat Management Plan (HMP) for protection, maintenance, and enhancement of wildlife habitat, primarily for upland-game birds. This includes 87 Isolated Tracts currently covered by the HMP.

Livestock would be excluded from 821 acres of Isolated Tracts by fencing.

T1-Transfer. 3,200 acres. These areas would be available for transfer from Federal ownership. Transfer could be by sale, exchange, agricultural entry, or other means determined appropriate as *discussed on pages 3-15, 3-16, and E-1 to E-3*. Detailed examination would be conducted for these tracts prior to the final decision about transfer or type of transfer. Examinations would consider threatened and endangered species, cultural resources, and other resource values. *Agricultural entry applications and other transfer proposals for these areas would be considered in the order received.*

These areas were identified as transfer areas in the existing Canyon Management Framework Plan (MFP).

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T3-Jerome County Canyon Rim Transfer. 258 acres. This area would be available for transfer from Federal ownership as described for T1, but only if zoning regulations were changed to allow commercial or residential development.

This area was identified as a transfer area in the existing Canyon MFP.

Other Resource Uses in Alternative A.

Fire Management. The entire planning area would be covered by a limited suppression plan in Alternative A. The purpose of this plan would be to more efficiently use fire suppression funds. However, since the planning area is subject to large fires, limited suppression would only take place when the burning index is below 22. This would typically require full suppression during July and August. Large, repeated fires cannot be tolerated from the wildlife habitat and soil erosion standpoint.

The General Fire Suppression Guidelines in Appendix B under Standard Operating Procedures would apply to the entire planning area.

Prescribed fire could be used as a tool for accomplishing the 13,000 acres of brush control proposed under Livestock Forage. The guidelines for Prescribed Fire in Appendix D under Range Improvements would apply. The use of prescribed fire in areas other than those proposed for brush control would be allowed only if found to be environmentally acceptable through consideration of environmental effects in the NEPA process. Such use could include projects such as noxious weed abatement or habitat management not foreseen at this time.

Wildlife Habitat. Artificial nest structures would be constructed for the ferruginous hawk, Swainson's hawk, and burrowing owl to increase populations. Specific numbers and locations of these structures would be determined in detailed examination of habitat suitable for each species. Ferruginous hawk nest structures would be placed in remote areas. Swainson's hawk nest structures would be placed on Isolated Tracts (L11). Burrowing owl nest boxes would be placed primarily on Isolated Tracts, but also throughout the breeding range.

Livestock Forage. Provide 97,562 AUMs of livestock forage. Approximately 907,511 acres of public land would be included in grazing allotments (see Maps 1 and 9). Average stocking rate would be 9.3 acres per AUM.

The objective for Alternative A would be to maintain existing livestock use.

Brush control would be accomplished on 13,000 acres. This is an on-going project covered by an existing AMP. No other range improvements are proposed for Alternative A.

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The proposed stocking level of 97,562 AUMs is the five-year average actual use for 1978 to 1982 less 330 AUMs on lands identified for transfer from Federal ownership in the Canyon MFP. No grazing preference is proposed on tracts included in a transfer category. For some allotments, less than five years of actual use was averaged because wildfires closed a portion or all of the allotment to grazing for a time.

A stocking level of 97,562 AUMs is being proposed for Alternative A even though present active preference is 149,135 AUMs. This is because the five-year average actual use level is a better indication of continuation of present management than the active preference, which includes 34 percent nonuse.

The initial stocking level for Alternative A would be 97,892 AUMs (average actual use). Adjustments down to the proposed preference, 97,562 AUMs, would occur as tracts identified as transfer areas in the Canyon MFP are transferred from Federal ownership.

In line with the objective of maintaining existing livestock use, no changes in season of livestock use are proposed in Alternative A.

In Alternative A, it is assumed that 4,982 sheep AUMs would be converted to cattle AUMs. Actual conversion would be allowed consistent with the Shoshone District Conversion Policy. The assumed conversion is based on the following.

1. Conversions would be allowed only in allotments having conversion guidelines in existing AMPs.
2. Conversion guidelines in existing AMPs would be followed.
3. The maximum conversion allowed by the factors listed above would occur.

Soils. The ORV restrictions in portions of the Snake River Rim SRMA (L9) would help meet the objective of keeping soil erosion within tolerable levels. Another action that would help meet this objective is the seeding of 150 acres to stabilize active sand dunes in the Lake Walcott area. This project has already been initiated in an existing problem area.

Summary of Activity Plans Required for Implementation of Alternative A.

One Limited Fire Suppression Plan

Alternative B

Goals. This alternative would favor production and use of commodity resources and commercial use authorization. Management direction would favor

*Alternatives Considered in Detail
Description of Alternatives; Alternative B*

higher livestock stocking levels, more range improvements, land disposal for agricultural development, and transfer of isolated or difficult to manage parcels out of Federal ownership. Restrictions on mining, mineral leasing, mineral material removal, and off-road vehicle use would be minimized.

Multiple Use and Transfer Areas in Alternative B. Map 3 shows multiple use and transfer areas for Alternative B.

M1-Moderate Use. 828,400 acres. No special limitations or restrictions on the type or intensity of resource use would be applied in this area. Valid uses would be allowed subject to environmental review and stipulations or special conditions to protect resources. This area would be open to ORV use.

L1-WSA Recommended Suitable. 67,889 acres. These areas would be recommended suitable for designation by Congress as a part of the Wilderness Preservation System. This includes portions of the Raven's Eye and Little Deer WSAs.

These areas would be recommended suitable in Alternative B because they are considered to have medium to high quality wilderness character and conflicts with other resource uses are minimal. Emphasis was placed on resolution of conflicts, particularly conflicts with resource uses favored under Alternative B.

If designated wilderness by Congress, the areas would be closed to ORV use. New mining claims would be prohibited. Mineral leasing would not be prohibited by wilderness designation, but wilderness character would be considered in making mineral leasing decisions. Land uses would be restricted to those compatible with BLM's Wilderness Management Policy. Utility developments would be effectively prohibited. A wilderness management plan would be prepared for each WSA designated. The wilderness management plans would include fire suppression guidelines designed to protect or enhance wilderness character.

If not designated wilderness by Congress, the areas would generally be managed as M1 areas as described above. The exception is 933 acres of an area of geologic interest within the Raven's Eye WSA which would be managed as an L12 area as described below. No other special designations or developments would be proposed. The other restrictions on ORVs, minerals, land uses, and fire described above would not apply.

L6-ACEC-Vineyard Creek Natural Area. 105 acres. This area would be designated an ACEC to focus management attention on special values.

Vineyard Creek is the only known spawning habitat for an unique cutthroat/rainbow hybrid trout. The habitat is threatened by sedimentation from irrigation return flow from private land. Management to protect this habitat would

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entail coordinating with private landowners to reduce or eliminate sedimentation caused by the irrigation return flow entering Vineyard Creek. The objective would be to lower the sedimentation load of the return flow below 100 ppm or to stop the return flow from entering the stream.

Vineyard Creek contains habitat that may be suitable for the Bliss Rapids snail, a candidate endangered species. The habitat in Vineyard Creek is similar to that of Box Canyon which supports a population of the snail. Future resource uses and proposals would be closely examined to ensure that snail habitat would not be adversely affected or that adverse effects could be mitigated.

The Vineyard Creek area is a very scenic and unique area. Future resource uses and proposals would be closely examined to prevent degradation of scenic quality and naturalness. No surface occupancy associated with mineral lease development would be allowed.

An activity plan would be prepared to guide management of the unique resources of the area. This plan would specify measures to reduce sedimentation of Vineyard Creek.

The area would be closed to ORV use to protect scenic quality and promote visitor safety. The area is near an area heavily used by ORVs.

The area would be given priority for fire suppression in the fire management plan and would be under full fire suppression.

L7-ACEC-Box Canyon/Blueheart Springs Sensitive Area. 128 acres. This area would be designated an ACEC to focus management attention on special values.

Box Canyon and Blueheart Springs contain the largest populations of Shoshone sculpin, a candidate threatened species, known to exist on public land. Various proposals that might degrade the sculpin habitat have been made in the past. Future proposals would be scrutinized to ensure the habitat would not be adversely affected or that adverse effects could be mitigated. Otherwise, the proposal would be rejected.

Box Canyon contains habitat for the Bliss Rapids snail, a candidate endangered species. Although the known populations of the snail occur on private land, the species could occur on public land in the canyon. Future resource uses and proposals would be closely examined to ensure that snail habitat would not be adversely affected or that adverse effects could be mitigated.

Box Canyon is very scenic and is a unique natural area. It has been evaluated for eligibility for national natural landmark designation. Future resource uses and proposals would be closely examined to prevent degradation of scenic quality and naturalness. No surface occupancy associated with mineral lease development would be allowed.

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Description of Alternatives; Alternative B*

An activity plan would be prepared to guide management of the unique resources of the area. This plan would include provisions to protect habitat for the Shoshone sculpin and the Bliss Rapids snail.

The area would be open to ORV use. ORV use in the general area is light and is not expected to be a problem in Box Canyon.

The area would be given priority for fire suppression in the fire management plan and would be under full fire suppression.

L8-Little Wood River SRMA. 2,787 acres. The riparian habitat and fishery of this area would be maintained or improved to support quality sport fishing opportunities. This would be done by excluding livestock from most of the streamside area. Most of the fencing to accomplish this has already been completed. Management emphasis would be placed on assuring the fencing is maintained to protect the streambank. A recreation activity management plan would be prepared for the area. The area would be open to ORV use.

L9-Snake River Rim SRMA. 4,135 acres. This area would be managed to provide for a wide variety of recreation activities including rifle shooting, archery, motorcycle riding/racing, picnicking, and sightseeing while resolving conflicts among various uses and protecting cultural resources and fragile soils. The demand for these activities is expected to increase as is the potential for user conflicts.

Sub-area L9a, 345 acres in Devil's Corral, would be closed to ORV use to protect cultural resources and soils. The remaining 3,793 acres would be open to ORV use. Livestock grazing and minerals activities would not be restricted by recreation-oriented management in L9.

The existing Snake River Rim Recreation Area Management Plan would be revised to reflect changes from existing ORV designations, acreage within the Snake River Rim SRMA, and transfer area designations.

A cultural resource management plan would be prepared for Devil's Corral (L9a). This plan would specify the degree of protection and the interpretive measures appropriate for the area. Fire suppression guidelines to limit surface disturbance would be developed and incorporated into the fire management plan.

L10-Cedar Fields SRMA. 2,240 acres. This area would be managed to provide a variety of recreation activities including ORV use, sport fishing, and river floating; to maintain or enhance wildlife habitat; and to protect scenic quality, fragile soils, and cultural resources.

ORV use would be limited in the area, but restrictions would be applied only where significant damage to high quality and highly visible scenic areas,